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SUBJECT: NINEWA: PROVINCE CONTINUES TO LEAD THE WAY IN
VOTER REGISTRATION

Classified By: Ninewa PRT Leader Alex Laskaris, Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

This is a Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

¶1. (C) Summary: Registration Voter totals in Ninewa exceed those of all other provinces, due partly to an aggressive information campaign organized by head elections official Abdel Khaleq al-Dabagh. Registering IDPs has been a particular priority, although progress has been slower. Serious security incidents are down; there were three minor security incidents for the week ending August 7. End Summary.

Relatively High Voter Registration Totals

¶2. (C) PRT officials met with the Ninewa Governorate Election Office (GEO) Director, Abdel Khaleq al-Dabagh, on August 7 regarding the status of voter registration in Ninewa. (Abdel Khaleq is a Sunni from Ninewa, who generally has been a good partner for the PRT.) The discussion included Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), how citizens are being educated on the voter registration process, and the security of Voter Registration Centers (VRCs). With registration turn-out at VRCs at 158,000 as of August 7, Ninewa Province has far exceeded the count in all other provinces. Abdel Khaleq has actively encouraged voter registration by working closely with the five UNOPS funded non-governmental organizations to guide their activities towards areas with low voter registration counts. In addition, The GEO Director remarked that his TV appearances have had a significant impact on voter registration figures, citing an increase of 4,000 over the previous day's figures following one recent interview.

An Aggressive Push to Register IDPs

¶3. (C) Recently, IDP registration totals jumped from 56 to 680 within five days. Despite the jump, the 680 total is still only a fraction of the estimated 7,800 IDP families in Ninewa. (Note: 7,800 is a Ministry of Interior estimate. The GEO speculates there are many more.) Consequently, the GEO will continue to appear on television in hopes of maintaining and increasing the numbers of IDPs registering. According to a survey conducted by the GEO, the low level of IDP registration is due to lack of IDP awareness of the need to register and, in some cases, lack of IDP desire to vote in their home of record. To counteract the lack of awareness, the IHEC approved a flyer informing IDPs how to register. The PRT paid for printing 2,000 of the flyers, which are being distributed by local organizations.

Only Three Minor Security Incidents in Last Week

14. (C) Only three minor security incidents affecting VRCs were reported in the past week: an instance of sniper fire with no casualties, threats against a VRC's employees, and a child attempting to obtain personal information from visitors and staff at one VRC. All incidents occurred in Mosul District, and the GEO Director views them as minor. Abdel Khaleq has requested funding for landlines in the GEO to remedy the fact that GEO staff must make calls to VRCs on their personal cell phones with no reimbursement. With only 57 VRCs, the costs are manageable, but when the approximately 4000 voting centers come online, the costs will become prohibitive. He also remarked that other GEOs have landlines. Abdel Khaleq has yet to receive a response from IHEC. In addition, the GEO still lacks basic supplies, such as pens, pencils, paper and printer cartridges. According to IFES, many GEO,s in the North have this issue, but IHEC has allocated no funds for such items.

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